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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 45th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO MR. AMJAD ALI, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Mr. FORAN (Acting Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management), speaking on behalf of the Fifth Committee and the Secretariat, paid a tribute to Mr. Amjad Ali for his long years of service to the United Nations as Permanent Representative of Pakistan and, in particular, his 25 years in the exacting office of Chairman of the Committee on Contributions. His diplomatic skills and command of technicalities had enabled him to achieve consensus in that Committee to win the Fifth Committee's approval of the scales of assessment and changes in those scales worked out under his chairmanship. He had pleasure in presenting him, as a token of the Fifth Committee's esteem, with an album of United Nations commemorative stamps for each of the 25 years in which he had served in that office.

2. Mr. MARKER (Pakistan) expressed appreciation of the tribute paid to his distinguished compatriot by the Fifth Committee, its Bureau and the Secretariat, and wished him continued success in his important work for the Organization.

3. Mr. AL-ARIMI (Oman) said that his delegation joined in the thanks to Mr. Amjad Ali and in the celebration of his outstanding work.

4. Mr. ALI (Chairman of the Committee on Contributions) thanked the Committee for its tribute and said that the honour should be shared by the members of the Committee on Contributions and by its three secretaries, all women, who had served it so devotedly over the last 43 years.

5. The CHAIRMAN said that he spoke for all the members of the Fifth Committee in reiterating the tribute paid by the Acting Under-Secretary-General and in wishing Mr. Amjad Ali continued health, wisdom and success.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (chaps. I, IV (sect. F) and VII (sects. B and D)) (A/46/3 and Add.1)

6. The CHAIRMAN said that the agenda item had been allocated concurrently to several Main Committees of the General Assembly. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to take note of the chapters of the report which had been allocated to it.

7. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 112: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT (continued) (A/C.5/46/L.4)

Draft decision A/C.5/46/L.4

8. Mr. KARBUCZKY (Hungary) introduced the draft decision, and expressed the hope that it could be adopted without a vote.

9. Mrs. GOICOCHEA (Cuba), after pointing out a minor drafting change in the Spanish version of the draft decision, urged the Committee to give substantial consideration to the item at the next session. Her delegation supported the work of the Joint Inspection Unit and hoped that a final decision with regard to the Unit would not be prejudged.

10. Draft decision A/C.5/46/L.4 was adopted.

AGENDA ITEM 111: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY COORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS WITH THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (continued) (A/C.5/46/48; A/C.5/46/L.5)

Draft decision A/C.5/46/L.5

11. The CHAIRMAN said that while the statement of programme budget implications in document A/C.5/46/48 had originally been prepared in connection with draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.3, the substantive paragraph to which that statement referred had been transferred to draft decision A/C.5/46/L.5, so that the statement should now be considered in relation to the draft decision.

12. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Secretary-General had indicated, in paragraph 12 of document A/C.5/46/48, that the implementation of paragraph (b) of draft decision A/C.5/46/L.5 would require an additional appropriation of $94,900. The Advisory Committee recommended that any additional appropriations that might be required should be considered by the General Assembly in the context of the first performance report for the biennium 1992-1993. Accordingly, adoption of the draft decision would not give rise to any additional appropriations at the current stage.

13. The Advisory Committee was concerned, however, at the procedure proposed in the Secretary-General's statement. Paragraph (b) of the draft decision requested the Secretary-General to take into account the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee in appointing a consultant. There was no evidence in the Secretary-General's statement that those recommendations had, in fact, been taken into account.

14. Paragraphs 3 to 6 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/46/546) had been carefully drafted, and the observations and recommendations made therein took account of the past and current discussions on the subject. The Advisory Committee recommended, in paragraphs 5 and 6, that the United Nations should commission the Panel of External Auditors to prepare a comprehensive study,

utilizing the services of an audit expert who must be thoroughly familiar with the United Nations system. The study would then be submitted to the General Assembly by the Panel of External Auditors. That was not the procedure proposed in document A/C.5/46/48.

15. In addition, the Advisory Committee was of the view that, even if no agreement could be reached among the agencies during the current round of discussions, the comprehensive study should still be carried out under the auspices of the Panel of External Auditors.

16. The Panel had raised the subject with the Advisory Committee, which had brought it to the attention of the General Assembly. The statements made by delegations at the current session on the Panel's interim study and on agenda item 104 clearly indicated that Member States were convinced of the need to develop, without further delay, accounting standards to be applied in the United Nations and the specialized agencies. To that end, the Advisory Committee had urged the agencies, through the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), to give priority to the subject and to conclude their current discussions expeditiously.

17. Ms. BEAULIEU (Canada) said that, in the view of her delegation, a study which would produce a set of accounting standards for common application to the United Nations system as a whole was of the greatest importance. Her delegation was troubled by the attitude of the organizations of the system which had decided, through the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) (CCAQ (FB)), to convene a working party to study the question further. It was to be hoped that the convening of the working party would neither delay nor hamper the work of the independent audit expert. Member States, as shareholders of the organizations, were entitled to clear and meaningful information enabling them to assess the performance of their investment in the system. Such a study had been recommended by the Panel of External Auditors, who had detailed knowledge of the question, and by the Advisory Committee. Her delegation hoped that the organizations of the system would understand and accept the need for the study and cooperate fully.

18. Furthermore, it was regrettable that in preparing statements of programme budget implications the Secretariat had failed to identify alternatives for funding in cases where the contingency fund could not accommodate the expenditure in question. Her delegation was concerned at the suggestion in paragraph 14 of document A/C.5/46/48 that the implementation of the draft decision might have to be postponed. Canada supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the contingency fund procedures should be strictly observed, and found it difficult to believe that the Secretariat had been unable to identify low-priority areas from which resources amounting to $94,900 could be redeployed.

19. Her delegation urged that the necessary steps should be taken so that the study of current accounting procedures could be given the attention which it deserved and could be completed within a reasonable period.

20. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation agreed with the views expressed by the representative of Canada. The United States was troubled by the Secretary-General's decision to ignore the language of paragraph (b) of the draft decision specifying that the costs should be met "from within existing resources", and to request an additional appropriation. If the current trend continued, it would be pointless for the General Assembly to adopt resolutions, since the Secretary-General seemed to believe that he could do whatever he wished.

21. His delegation welcomed the Advisory Committee's decision not to recommend an additional appropriation at the current stage. However, if the cost of the study was to be included in the first performance report for the next biennium, the Organization's overall budget level was likely to increase. That would have the effect of granting to the Secretary-General the additional appropriation requested, not at the current session, but in one year's time. Nevertheless, his delegation was prepared to go along with the Advisory Committee's recommendation, on the understanding that the Secretary-General would clearly indicate in the performance report how the costs had been absorbed, under the terms of the decision which was before the Committee.

22. Mr. BIDNY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) endorsed the views of the previous speaker.

23. Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium) said that the expression "within existing resources" had been introduced following informal consultations and had been accepted by his delegation on the understanding that the costs of appointing a consultant would not affect the resources allocated to the Panel of External Auditors. He requested clarification from the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division.

24. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that, while the adoption by the Committee of the Advisory Committee's recommendation would represent an innovation in the budgetary process, the Secretariat would have no objection to it. Although the first performance report was normally concerned with currency fluctuations and inflation, the recommendation was consistent with what had been discussed previously, namely, the possibility of resource transfers between sections of the programme budget. If the Committee so wished, attempts would be made to absorb the additional costs, taking into account the statements made concerning the Panel of External Auditors.

25. Draft decision A/C.5/46/L.5 was adopted.

26. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, on the basis of the statement submitted by the Secretary-General and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft decision A/C.5/46/L.5, additional requirements estimated at $94,900 would arise under section 1 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. The actual additional resources required should be indicated in

(The Chairman)

the context of the first performance report. He further suggested that the Fifth Committee should endorse the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee as contained in document A/46/546.

27. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 107: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/46/L.13 concerning agenda item 29 (continued) (A/46/7/Add.10; A/C.5/46/38)

28. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), drawing attention to document A/46/7/Add.10, said that paragraph 4 should be revised to read "six General Service (Other level), eight Field Service and 13 local level".

29. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, on the basis of the statement submitted by the Secretary-General and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/46/L.13, an appropriation of $6 million would be required under section 2 of the proposed programme budget for the first year of the biennium 1992-1993; furthermore, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/213, those additional requirements should be met without recourse to the contingency fund. In addition, an appropriation of $359,700 would be required under section 36 (Staff assessment), to be offset by the same amount under section 1 (Income from staff assessment). Lastly, he suggested that the Fifth Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should endorse the comments and observations of the Advisory Committee as contained in document A/46/7/Add.10.

30. It was so decided.

31. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom), explaining his delegation's position on the decision just adopted, expressed satisfaction at having been able to join the consensus on the question. While the United Kingdom supported the Secretary-General's efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan, it shared the concerns, expressed over the level of justification provided for the additional resources requested. The estimate for the rental and operation of aircraft in document A/C.5/46/38 (annex, table 1) was of particular concern, as it appeared to be disproportionate to the requirements of the mission.

32. His delegation attached importance to the Advisory Committee's recommendations and, in particular, to paragraph 7 of document A/46/7/Add.10. It was not clear why an increased appropriation under section 2 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 would not be offset by an increased income estimate under income section 2 (General income) of the

(Mr. Kinchen, United Kingdom)

programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991, as suggested by footnote (c) to table 1. It should be recalled that General Assembly resolution 41/213 required the Secretary-General to make efforts to absorb additional expenditures, including unforeseen and extraordinary expenses connected with the maintenance of peace and security.

Honoraria payable to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations (A/46/7/Add.8; A/C.5/46/12)

33. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had submitted a single report on the honoraria payable to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations and on the representation allowance for under-secretaries-general and assistant secretaries-general (A/46/7/Add.8). The Advisory Committee had been informed that the Secretary-General intended to conduct a more comprehensive review of both those matters and of the issues raised in paragraphs 67 and 85 of the Advisory Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 (A/46/7) and to report on them to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. In the circumstances, the Advisory Committee recommended that the question of the honoraria payable to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations (A/C.5/46/12) should be taken up at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly in connection with the Secretary-General's comprehensive study.

34. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Fifth Committee recommended to the General Assembly that it should defer action on the matter until its forty-seventh session.

35. It was so decided.

Representation allowance for under-secretaries-general and assistant secretaries-general (A/46/7/Add.8; A/C.5/46/32)

36. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee recommended that the subject raised in the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/46/32) should be taken up at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly in connection with the Secretary-General's comprehensive study.

37. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Fifth Committee recommended to the General Assembly that it should defer action on the matter until its forty-seventh session.

38. It was so decided.

Construction of additional conference facilities at Addis Ababa and Bangkok (A/46/7/Add.3; A/C.5/46/22)

39. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said, in regard to the expansion of the conference facilities of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at Bangkok, that the Secretary-General's report indicated that final testing, furnishing and commissioning of the building was expected to be completed during the period October to December 1992. He drew the Committee's attention to the observations in paragraphs 3 to 5 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/46/7/Add.3). As indicated in paragraph 7 of that report, it was currently estimated that an additional amount of some $4.4 million would be required. The Secretary-General proposed to finance that additional cost from interest income accruing to the construction account. Paragraph 8 of the report reproduced a breakdown of the additional costs which had given rise to the request and paragraphs 9 to 14 gave detailed explanations of the way in which those costs had arisen. Paragraphs 15 to 20 contained a number of reservations, concerns and observations expressed by the Advisory Committee in regard to the additional expense, and paragraphs 21 and 22 contained the Committee's recommendations.

40. Paragraphs 23 to 29 of the report contained the Advisory Committee's recommendations regarding the expansion of the conference facilities of the Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa. As it had indicated at the preceding session of the General Assembly, the Advisory Committee recognized that the situation in Addis Ababa was difficult but urged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to expedite work on the project. It reiterated the view expressed at the forty-fourth session, that further delay was likely to result in a further escalation of the final total cost of the project. The Assembly might wish to take note of the report of the Secretary-General as well as the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

41. Mr. WIELAARD (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community, said that the Twelve had taken note of the Secretary-General's progress report on the two construction projects and the comments of the Advisory Committee. With regard to the project in Bangkok, the Twelve agreed with the Advisory Committee that the clear implication of earlier reports by the Secretariat had been that the total price of the contract was protected against any changes, including those arising out of inflation or variations in quantities. The concern expressed by the Advisory Committee was fully justified and its request for full disclosure of the contract terms should be endorsed. The principle of using interest income to meet additional costs appeared questionable in terms of equity at a time when a majority of Member States were not meeting their obligations to pay their assessed contributions promptly and in full. The Twelve were prepared to accept the recommendations in paragraph 21 of the Advisory Committee's report but they did so without prejudice to their future position should such a procedure be proposed again. They also attached importance to the Advisory Committee's observations in regard to limiting the share of additional costs that should be borne by the United Nations.

(Mr. Wielaard, Netherlands)

42. The situation of the people of Ethiopia had been and still was a source of major concern to the Twelve, which had been translated into contributions to the ongoing emergency operation in that country. Although they agreed that the transport of building materials from the port to the building site should be speeded up as much as possible in order to avoid costly delays in the progress of the project, they considered that the transport of emergency goods should be given the highest priority. The well-being of the population should take precedence over building operations and they would like an assurance that adequate steps would be taken to ensure that that priority was always complied with.

43. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that his delegation believed that the new conference centre at Addis Ababa was an unnecessary use of United Nations resources. While it recognized the concern of delegations from the region that Africa should be provided with adequate conference facilities, other alternatives should have been explored. Developments since the project had first been approved at the thirty-ninth session led his delegation to believe that its position had been and continued to be correct. While it would not vote against additional appropriations, that decision should not be construed as a change in the position it had consistently taken for the past seven years.

44. It appeared from the report that the United Nations had spent nearly $12 million on the Addis Ababa project. His delegation would like a detailed breakdown of those expenditures. If the information was not available immediately, it should be provided to the informal consultations on the proposed programme budget. Apparently, the only work done so far at the site related to land clearance and construction of temporary buildings for the building crew. Obviously, other work had been done in connection with the $12 million committed or expended on the project, but the details were not available. The statement that the Addis Ababa project was only two to four months behind schedule was questionable. His delegation also questioned the need to approve the full $57.4 million in the budget for 1992-1993. It would like to know why the Secretariat believed that, given the current circumstances, it could commit the entire amount during the coming biennium. He asked whether, if those funds were not used for the project, the United Nations Financial Regulations would permit them to be temporarily redeployed to finance other regular budget activities. Would the construction account serve as a de facto internal reserve fund?

45. His delegation was also concerned by the serious transportation problems in Ethiopia which appeared to be delaying work on the project. It would appreciate a confirmation from the Secretariat that transportation requirements for construction would not in any way interfere with humanitarian relief efforts in Ethiopia.

46. The Advisory Committee's report on the Bangkok project was also very disturbing. Apparently, the Secretariat officials negotiating with the construction firm had in essence agreed to all the firm's demands for

(Mr. Cohen, United States)

additional funding. As the Advisory Committee noted, in several instances the contractor had not lived up to all the terms of the agreement signed with the United Nations. Despite that non-compliance, the United Nations had agreed to pay additional amounts. His delegation regretted the ease with which the Secretariat was prepared to disburse funds provided by Governments. The External Auditors should undertake an urgent review of all aspects of the agreements between the Secretariat and the contractor. His delegation therefore proposed that the Committee should request the Board of Auditors to audit the terms of the contract, the contractor's compliance with those terms, and the role of the Secretariat in negotiating and implementing the agreement. The Board should report its findings in the context of the audit of United Nations accounts for the biennium 1990-1991. That was a formal proposal which should be considered in the informal consultations on the budget.

47. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) associated his delegation with the concern expressed by the representative of the Netherlands. He noted that the United States delegation had put forward a formal proposal in regard to the Addis Ababa construction project for consideration during the informal consultations. His delegation also would like an assurance regarding United Nations policy on the transport of relief supplies and building materials before any action was taken on the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

48. Mr. FORAN (Acting Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, there were difficulties with transport in Ethiopia. The priorities in that regard were established by the Ethiopian authorities. Views similar to those expressed by delegations had been conveyed by the Economic Commission for Africa to the Ethiopian authorities, who were taking them into consideration. He believed that were willing to give priority to humanitarian-related transport requirements over those that were less important such as those for construction.

49. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Fifth Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it approve the report of the Secretary-General, taking into account the comments and observations of the Advisory Committee and the views expressed by delegations on the matter in the Fifth Committee.

50. The proposal was adopted.

Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions of the Economic and Social Council at its first and second regular sessions of 1991 (A/46/7/Add.4; A/C.5/46/34)

51. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee was recommending that the Fifth Committee should take note of an estimate of $70,200 on the understanding that any additional appropriations would be considered in the context of a consolidated statement subject to the guidelines of the contingency fund.

52. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Fifth Committee should take note of the estimate of $70,200 on the understanding that such additional appropriations as might be requested by the Secretary-General would be in the context of a consolidated statement to be submitted to the General Assembly towards the end of the current session in accordance with section C, paragraphs 5 and 6, of the annex to General Assembly resolution 42/211. The requirements for the biennium 1994-1995 would be dealt with in the context of the proposed programme budget for that biennium.

53. The proposal was adopted.

54. Mr. AHMED (Iraq) said that the fact that his delegation had joined in the consensus on the revised estimates did not imply any change in its position with regard to Economic and Social Council decisions 1991/251, 1991/252 and 1991/256 relating to the situation of human rights in Kuwait, Cuba and Iraq, respectively.

Administrative and financial arrangements for the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (A/46/7/Add.6; A/C.5/46/25)

55. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee was recommending reinstatement of an amount of $1,432,300 under section 13 of the programme budget in respect of the International Conference on Population and Development.

56. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation was not aware of any legislative mandate for funding any activities for the conference from the regular budget. Indeed, it was his delegation's interpretation of the discussions held regarding the conference that extrabudgetary resources were to be relied on to the fullest extent possible. It had also been suggested that the funding formula applied in respect of the 1984 conference should be considered.

57. His Government had already made a substantial contribution to the upcoming conference on the understanding that the 1984 formula would in fact be applied, and did not think it appropriate to assess Member States under the regular budget. His delegation would be willing to reconsider its position should it be demonstrated that a legislative mandate for regular budget funding existed. He proposed that the Committee should take no action for the time being, pending informal consultations.

58. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that nothing in Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/91, which called for the convening of the conference, excluded the possibility of regular budget funding.

59. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation was still not satisfied that regular budget funding was appropriate. Further discussion in informal consultations was needed.

60. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should defer its consideration of the matter before it to allow time for informal consultations thereon.

61. It was so decided.

Conference servicing of intergovernmental bodies convened at Nairobi (A/46/7/Add.5; A/C.5/46/29)

62. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had reviewed arrangements in place for similar meetings at Habitat and the regional commissions and had noted that conference-servicing costs were met from the budget provisions for conference servicing of the intergovernmental bodies concerned. Unfortunately, no statement of programme budget implications had been submitted to the General Assembly at the appropriate time in respect of the matter now before the Committee.

63. The Advisory Committee felt that the principle of supporting the meetings in question should be recognized. The Secretary-General was requesting funding at the rate of 25 per cent of the resources required for the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives. No additional appropriations under the regular budget were needed for the time being, but any additional appropriations that might be required should be reported in the context of the first performance report for the biennium 1992-1993. Resources needed subsequently by UNEP and Habitat should be included in the budget submissions under the relevant sections.

64. Mr. SEIGNEURIN (France) said that his delegation had no objection to the 25 per cent level of funding. It seemed, however, that the conference-servicing requirements of other, comparable bodies were fully funded under the regular budget. His delegation saw no reason why the Committee of Permanent Representatives of UNEP should not be treated similarly. His delegation could thus accept the proposal to provide funding at the level of 25 per cent on the understanding that the remaining 75 per cent would also be provided, if necessary. In that connection the Advisory Committee had noted in its report that the relevant costs should in future be included in the total conference requirements budgeted under the relevant sections of the programme budget.

65. Mr. WU Gang (China) noted that the provision for Chinese language staff at the Commission on Human Settlements was not at the same level as for other languages. The additional amount of $73,000 proposed in respect of pre-session documentation in Chinese seemed inadequate, and it was not clear to his delegation whether it related to only one year of the biennium or to both.

66. Miss SHITAKHA (Kenya) said that her delegation fully supported the view expressed by the representative of France. She could not support any decision unless it was clear that the remaining 75 per cent would be found, if

(Miss Shitakha, Kenya)

necessary, from the regular budget. With regard to the cost of free-lance interpretation teams, the outrageous cost indicated in the documentation before the Committee was a firm argument for considering a permanent conference-servicing establishment based either at Nairobi or Addis Ababa.

67. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation did not see why an additional amount was being requested for documentation in Chinese rather than having been included initially. He agreed with the representative of Kenya that the cost of free-lance interpretation teams was outrageous, and requested a breakdown of the figures cited. It seemed that serious consideration should be given to establishing an adequate permanent conference-servicing capacity at Nairobi or Addis Ababa. Regardless of where the resources for conference servicing came from, however, the large amounts involved were a drain and could be better spent on substantive activities in protection of the environment. Lastly, his delegation was concerned at the suggestion that the amount, if approved, would be covered in the performance report rather than the contingency fund, since such an approach was likely to circumvent the functioning of the contingency fund and vitiate the level at which the fund and the budget as a whole had been established. The matter should be discussed further in informal consultations.

68. Mr. ELDEEB (Egypt) said that he agreed with the remarks made by the representatives of Kenya and the United States about the estimated cost of conference services for meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives of UNEP. The figure of $614,400 for the biennium was very high. His delegation therefore proposed that the Fifth Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it request the Secretary-General to submit a report to its forty-seventh session on the possibility of establishing permanent conference services in the area, which might prove more economical than its current arrangements.

69. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the objection to endorsing the recommendations in paragraphs 27 and 28 of document A/C.5/46/29 might be met by adding to the proposed decision the further phrase "and taking into account the views expressed by delegations in the Fifth Committee".

70. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that such a qualification had not always proved effective in the past and his delegation could not therefore agree to take a decision on that basis.

71. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that his delegation appreciated the various concerns expressed. At the same time, it was conscious of the pressure of work and believed that the Advisory Committee's report provided a pragmatic basis on which to proceed. A compromise might be possible if the Secretariat were requested to reflect further on the issue and to produce recommendations on the most economical arrangements for providing appropriate conference services in Nairobi. His delegation was prepared to support the Chairman's formula on that basis and hoped that other delegations would feel

(Mr. Kinchen, United Kingdom)

able to do so too, despite their legitimate concerns. If the Committee could proceed in that way, the Governing Council of UNEP should also be requested to reflect on the nature and periodicity of meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives with a view to ensuring the optimum use of available resources.

72. Mr. SEIGNEURIN (France) said that his delegation's aim was not to increase expenditures but to ensure equal treatment for the various official languages in policy-making bodies. His delegation could support the Chairman's suggestion.

73. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), replying to the questions raised, said that the amount requested for the translation of documents into Chinese for the Commission on Human Settlements was sufficient to provide equal treatment because permanent translators were not involved. The reason why a request relating to pre-session documentation in Chinese was being made at the current stage and had not been included in the estimates for the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements was that China had become a member of the Commission, where before it had been an observer, as indicated in paragraph 8 of the note by the Secretary-General.

74. The Secretariat welcomed the suggestion that it should study the possibility of establishing permanent conference services in Nairobi or elsewhere in the region in place of the current ad hoc arrangements. With regard to the point made by the representative of the United States of America about the budgetary process, the Secretariat considered the Advisory Committee's recommendation to be exceptional, designed to deal with exceptional circumstances. Finally, the Secretariat would inform the competent officials in Nairobi about the views expressed in the Committee on the Secretary-General's proposals, the Advisory Committee's recommendations and the possibility of providing partial financing for conference services from the Environment Fund. They would, of course, also be informed of the Committee's decision that interpreter services should be provided and that their financing should be examined in the course of 1992.

75. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that he did not see how the matter before the Committee could be considered an exceptional case. In view of the more pressing needs of the environment programme, his delegation was concerned at the amount proposed to be spent on conference services and could not commit the United States to funding it. It could only very reluctantly agree to take action without recourse to informal consultations if the decision was to proceed along the lines suggested by the representative of the United Kingdom, on the understanding that such action would not constitute a precedent.

76. Miss SHITAKHA (Kenya) said that her delegation did not see why the principle of equal treatment of languages should interfere with the programmes of any United Nations body and hoped that it did not and would not do so in

(Miss Shitakha, Kenya)

practice. She reiterated her support for the views expressed by the representative of France and formally requested the Secretariat to produce a study on the most economical way of providing joint conference-servicing facilities at Nairobi, Addis Ababa or both.

77. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) reiterated that the Secretariat welcomed the request to study the possibility of improving the provision of conference services in Nairobi.

78. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the Fifth Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it endorse the recommendations contained in paragraphs 27 and 28 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/46/29), subject to the Advisory Committee's comments and observations in paragraphs 12 and 13 of its report (A/46/7/Add.5) and taking into account the views expressed by delegations in the Fifth Committee. He further proposed that the Secretary-General should be requested to report on the subject to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

79. The proposals were adopted.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.